

Desegregation and related court cases (such as *Lau v. Nichols*) were driven by demands by communities of color and language-minority communities for access to quality curriculum. Curriculum serves as a gatekeeper regulating who gets access to which opportunities in and beyond high school. Schools have served historically to sort students for a stratified labor market by means such as tracking and by linking academic expectations and school quality with the socioeconomic status and racial composition of neighborhoods in which schools are located (Anyon, 1981; Oakes, 1985). By challenging school segregation, biased testing, biased college admission processes, all-English curricula, tracking systems, biased special education placements, and so forth, communities of color and low-income communities sought access to rich curricula, full educational opportunity, and the same opportunities afforded White affluent English-speaking children.

Similarly, the women's movement fought to remove gender-based barriers to high school and college courses, college admission, athletics and scholarships, and other education opportunities. The mainstreaming movement, later called the inclusion movement, fought to open up access to the least restrictive educational environment for students with various forms of disabilities, and to change processes by which schools create disabilities through institutionalized assumptions about normalcy. These various struggles not only sought to remove barriers to access to quality curriculum, but also questioned core assumptions about knowledge, the hierarchical structure in which opportunities are embedded, and subtle ways schools continued to exclude and silence. For example, advocates of bilingual education have pressed educators to reconsider assumptions that children need to learn English *before* proceeding to academic learning, and that knowledge in languages other than English has minimal value.

Equal access to quality education for all students has been an ongoing struggle, yet to be realized. For example, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) identified three categories of factors that continue to advantage White students. Early development factors include birth weight, possibility of lead poisoning, and nutrition—health factors that reflect social policies that protect middle-class White children more comprehensively than children of color or poor White children (Barton, 2003). Home learning environment factors include being read to, amount of TV watching, parent availability and support, student mobility, and parent participation; some of these also relate to a social context, such as access to jobs. School environment factors include rigor of the school curriculum, teacher preparation, teacher experience and attendance, class size, availability of appropriate classroom technology, and school safety. The ETS report, across the board, found minority students disadvantaged relative to

White students in all 14 of the conditions and experiences conducive to student achievement.

In California two recent investigations reported similar factors that systematically reduce access to learning for students who are poor, students of color, and English-language learners (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolley, & Callahan, 2003; Oakes, Blasi, & Rogers, 2004). These include reduction of bilingual education programs, and inequitable access to the following: credentialed teachers; teachers with professional training for teaching English learners; forms of assessment that capture what language-minority students can do and that help guide classroom instruction; meaningful instructional time when students are in school; sufficient textbooks, computers, and other materials for students; materials that English learners can understand; and functional school facilities.

Textbooks have been the subject of analysis and advocacy for over a century (Zimmerman, 2002). Gay (1983) noted that "textbook analyses that appeared from the 1930s through the 1960s reported similar results for African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians. In fact, textbooks continued to report ethnic distortions, stereotypes, omissions, and misinformation as recently as the mid-1970s" (p. 54; see also Anyon, 1979; Britton, Lumpkin, & Britton, 1984; Hahn & Blankenship, 1983; Powell & Garcia, 1988; Tetreault, 1983, 1984). For at least 3 decades, advocates have argued that textbooks should be representative and accurate, not only for the sake of being truthful but because the quality of school experiences for students from historically oppressed communities is severely compromised when textbooks either omit their communities entirely or portray them in distorted and derogatory ways. However, as Banks (1993) noted, "because of the number of constraints and influences on the development of textbooks, school knowledge often does not include in-depth discussions and analysis of some of the major problems in American society" (p. 12). Textbooks continue to be a flash point of controversy because they inculcate narratives about who we are, how we came to be, where we are going, and whose knowledge counts, issues that are taken up in subsequent chapters of this book.

Multicultural education advocates argue that curricula, more broadly construed, have been too often irrelevant to students from historically marginalized communities. Starting on college campuses during the 1960s, youth demanded ethnic studies courses that related to their own experiences. Gay (1983) explained, "The student activists, abetted by the efforts of textbook analysts and by the new thinking about cultural differences, provided the stimulus for the first multiethnic education programs" by using strategies of civil rights activists such as sit-ins and boycotts (p. 54). Ethnic studies, women's studies, and later gay/lesbian studies scholarship

burgeoned as programs were created, and faculty who were hired to teach in them found themselves needing to unearth subjugated knowledge in order to teach it. For example, Cortés (2002) describes his own experience in Chicano studies during the early 1970s, when "the demand for ethnic studies 'experts' was enormous; the supply was minimal. Learning on the run had taken on new dimensions" (p. 11). Now, 30 years later, a wealth of research and theory in the various disciplines in ethnic studies, women's studies, disability studies, gay/lesbian studies, and other critical studies offers depth and substance to the quest for curriculum relevance and wholesale revision (Kumashiro, 2002).

Multicultural education advocates also argue that building curriculum and pedagogy on the cultural frames of reference and linguistic strengths of students from historically oppressed communities shows promise for improving student learning (Au, 1990; Gay, 2000). For example, based on a study of effective teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings (1994) articulated a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy in which teachers intentionally connect teaching to the lived experiences and knowledge frameworks of their students and students' communities. Research in dual-language learning shows that language-minority students in well-constructed dual-language programs outperform control group students in English-only programs on standard achievement tests (e.g., Cabazon, Nicoladis, & Lambert, 1998).

By the 1980s and onward, alternative models and approaches to curriculum design had been advanced (Gay, 1995). For example, Watkins (1993) sketched Black curriculum frameworks that had developed historically. Tetreault (1989) elaborated on phases of the integration of women into curriculum, ranging from womanless to transformed curriculum. Sleeter and Grant (2003) developed theoretical bases for five different approaches to multicultural education with specific implications for curriculum that share similarities with Banks's (1991b) four models. Cummins (1986) distinguished between empowering and disempowering models of curriculum and assessment for language-minority students, and Darder (1991) developed a model of bicultural critical pedagogy for the classroom. Britzman (1995) elaborated on a theory of queer pedagogy, and Kumashiro (2002) developed a model of antioppressive education. All of these offer guidance for adapting or building curriculum in ways that make constructive use of the wealth of knowledge coming from scholarly inquiry in the various "studies" (such as African American studies or postcolonial studies).

Now that I've given this brief history, I can discuss how the multicultural education movement frames the four central curriculum questions listed earlier in the chapter.



1. *What purposes should the curriculum serve?* Multicultural movements have defined the main purpose of curriculum as social improvement. In part, this means improvement of the lives of peoples who have been marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, social class, disability, and other identities. Social improvement includes addressing the poor quality of schooling children from historically oppressed communities have received. Multicultural movements situate underachievement within a range of equity issues, arguing that creating equitable conditions for learning will close achievement gaps. Different theorists and constituents define somewhat differently the central issues needing to be addressed (e.g., attitude change versus structural change) and the primary focal group (e.g., racial groups, women, people with disabilities). However, they share a goal of social improvement for equality and justice, and a belief that education should fuel democratic action. Broadly speaking, multicultural movements challenge the United States to live up to its ideals of justice and equality, believing that this country has the potential to work much better for everyone. As tomorrow's citizens, children in schools should learn academic tools and disciplinary knowledge resources from vantage points of multiple communities. Further, young people should develop some sense of solidarity across differences that enables working toward closing the gap between the nation's ideals and its realities.

2. *How should knowledge be selected, who decides what is most worth teaching and learning, and what is the relationship between those in the classroom and the knowledge selection process?* A central concern of multicultural movements has been opening up what counts as knowledge and who gets to decide. Scholars and educators point to countless ways in which "objective truth" has not been objective at all, but rather has consisted of "grand narratives" that are based on experiences and concerns of elites into which everyone is folded. Such narratives are presented as if they were universal and objective. Further, knowledge and the knowledge selection process relates directly to power. As Collins (1998) put it, "despite their commitment to truth, many of the truths produced by anthropology, biology, sociology, political science, history, and other academic disciplines manufactured consent for colonialism, imperialism, slavery, and apartheid" (p. 197). Gallegos (1998) emphasized that the "politics of interpretive location" is bound up with "a much larger contest over resources, space, legitimacy, and the interests of peoples" (p. 235). Rather than nailing down consensus over what everyone should learn, multicultural movements have opened up diverse funds of knowledge and arenas for research, debate, and dialog.